

Sailors earn Fleet Marine Force warfare designators

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Standing out while in a camouflage uniform can sometimes be a good thing. The five Sailors at Marine Corps Base Hawaii who recently qualified for the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) designation are hard to tell apart from their Marine counterparts. The only things that set them apart are the "U.S. Navy" nametape and the peculiar gray-steel warfare pin, both above the left breast pocket of their starched, squared-away cammies. The five Sailors are an exclusive group for now, but not for long.

In fact, any Sailor on type 2 or 4 sea duty attached to a Fleet Marine Force unit is eligible for the designation. But there's more to being FMF-qualified than simply wearing the pin.

"It takes a special breed of Sailor to go FMF," said Chief Hospital Corpsman (FMF) Thomas Peer, Leading Chief Petty Officer (LCPO) of Marine Air Group 24 at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. "You have to have the ability to embrace the unknown. You have to be more flexible. It's a challenge and it's a program for people who look for challenges."

The history of Navy hospital corpsmen and Marine battlefield teamwork stretches back to the Revolutionary War and it's marked with heroic acts. Hospital corpsmen have won more medals of honor than any other rate in the Navy. Most of them have come while serving with Marines in the field.

But according to Peer, in order to get the opportunity to go "above and beyond" in battle, it's necessary to go out of your way to get FMF qualified.

"You're given a maximum of 18 months to complete the (personal qualification standard). A lot of that time is spent doing specific Marine training in your off duty hours, studying and going over things to get ready for the board," he said.

Much of the training a Sailor must



PHAN Adam Fabela photo

A First Class Hospital Corpsman, the LPO of MAG-24, gives the ready signal after donning a CBR suit. He was one of five Sailors who recently qualified for the Fleet Marine Force designation while stationed at MCBH, Kaneohe Bay.

complete to be FMF enlisted warfare specialist qualified revolves around the foundation of Marine training.

The Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS) book resembles an Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) or Enlisted Air Warfare Specialist (EAWS) book in thickness, but that's where the similarity ends. Inside the FMF book, the text teaches readers about things like Navy and Marine Corps history, customs and courtesies; Marine Corps operations; or amphibious operations. But much of the real learning takes place outside the classroom where you'll find most Marines - in the field.

"I'd have to say the toughest part of the training was the land navigation part of the course," said Peer. "It's stuff we never work with so it took me a little while to get it straight. I took the

land navigation class four or five times just to make sure I knew exactly what I was doing and it was worth it."

Hospital Corpsman First Class (AW/FMF) John McGaha, MAG 24 Leading Petty Officer (LPO), thought most of the difficulty in getting qualified came from the course itself. He said getting it done involved a complex mix of coordination with the experts who could teach him, and proper time management. "Pulling all of the information I'd learned over 18 months together at the end to study for the oral board was the most difficult thing," said McGaha. "Most of the people you learn from aren't very familiar with the FMF program to begin with so it involves a little cooperation. Everybody I worked with was more than helpful and extremely supportive."

To achieve the Fleet Marine Force designation, a Sailor needs to complete the full PQS, demonstrate the required knowledge in a written exam and prove him or herself in an oral exam. For hospital corpsmen, having the FMF designation means they have many abilities other corpsmen don't have.

"We're able to do more things in battle as FMF," said Peer. "I'm now able to call in a MEDEVAC [medical evacuation] on my own. I don't need a communications guy there with me because I know how to use the radio myself."

In addition, Peer said, FMF corpsmen can better maneuver in nuclear, biological and chemical environments. And with their training in land navigation, Peer says they can move wounded patients out of danger as good as any Marine. "With all of the training, it means we're truly self-sufficient out in the field," he said.

It may only take a second look to tell the difference between a Marine and an FMF Sailor. But the significance of the FMF warfare designation shows that a Sailor stands out in ways that can be proven in battle.

<div>Bravo Zulu</div>	
Defense Information Systems Agency, Pacific Shore Sailor of the Year 2001 IT1(SW) William A. Jeter Jr.	Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal CTT1(SS) Ryan R. Hartman SKCS Hector Gacad
SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One Bronze Star Medal (w/combat "V") Lt. Christian Dunbar	LOC CTM1 (SS/SW) Jeremy Blanchard CTT2 (SS) Francisco Ocasio
Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal Lt. Michael Benedetto BMC(SEAL/SW) Carl Denger BMC(SEAL) Peter Sagasti	NEPMU6 Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal Lt. Cmdr. T.L. Wilson (third award) HM2 Oliver B. Bascon (first award)
Army Achievement Medal HM3(SEAL) Marc Luttrell	Sailor of the Year (2001) HM2 Robert R. Ramirez
Flag Letter of Commendation DC1(DSW) Eric Dubreuil ET3 Dallas Smith	Sailor of the Quarter (4th Qtr, CY 2001) HM1 Robert P. Libarios
NSW/SEAL Designation Lt. Michael Becker Lt. j.g. John Jones Ens. Rafael E. Duyos III Ens. Michael Uyboco GM2(SEAL) Paul Knepper IT2(SEAL) David Noyessmith IS3(SEAL) Cory Hull HM3(SEAL) Marc Luttrell IS3(SEAL) Aaron Reed	Naval Station Pearl Harbor Senior Sailor of the Quarter MS1 Stanford Rideb
Diving Salvage Warfare Specialist QM1(DSW) Gary Hakes HM2(DSW) Daniel Stevens	Junior Sailor of the Quarter Sgt. Samuel Hart
Naval Security Group Activity Command SOQ CTT1 (SS)Donald R. Dean	Blue Jacket of the Quarter SN Ryan Hendrix
Senior SOQ CTA2 Peter Leone	Navy Region Hawaii Senior Sailor of the Year MM1(SS) Kimsey P. Hall, PH Naval Shipyard
Junior SOQ CTT3 Peter Rocco Jr.	Junior Sailor of the Year DC2 (SW) Ebin D. Latrimurti, ATG MIDPAC
	Blue Jacket of the Year SN Gena A. Miller, NAVSTA PH